



April 30, 1971

TURKEY: WAITING FOR THE NEW GOVERNMENT'S OPIUM PROGRAM

The Erim government, which came into office in late March, has not yet announced its program to control or eliminate opium production in Turkey. At present, the government is preoccupied with internal security, and its foreign policy initiatives are focussing on Cyprus and China. Ankara's ranking officials have privately cautioned the US that--in its own interests --opium should not become a public issue at this time. Legislation providing for the licensing of opium producers, which was expected to be passed in the waning months of the Demirel administration, remains bogged down in Parliament. The senior civilian leaders in the new government, however, have categorically stated that the pending legislation will be enacted. In the meantime, the Turks have attempted to tighten controls by an executive decree, which was issued March 19. In an environment of governmental caution, the initial test of Erim's good intentions regarding the poppy problem will come in late June, when the effectiveness of the government's effort to buy up opium gum can be gauged, and when the annual decree regulating the autumn planting of poppies will be issued.

Opium Policy: Playing it Cool for Now. The new government's only public reference to opium so far was contained in a brief passage in the

2

~~SECRET/NO FOREIGN DISSEM~~

DECLASSIFIED
PA/HO, Department of State
E.O. 12958, as amended
June 22, 2004

GROUP 1

Excluded from automatic
downgrading and
declassification

This report was produced by the Bureau of Intelligence and Research. Aside from normal substantive exchange with other agencies at the working level, it has not been coordinated elsewhere.

RNAN-13

Juno - Durgun

X2 Pte 15-2 Jun

government's program, which Erim presented to Parliament on April 2. The Prime Minister acknowledged that opium smuggling has become a "terrible disaster for the youth of the world" and promised that due importance will be given this problem. He also stated that "opium producers will be provided a better way to make a living." Erim later told Ambassador Handley that he had personally written this statement which expressed his humanitarian concern about the opium problem.

The US has been urged privately not to mount any public pressure on the new government to curb opium production. Otherwise, sharp criticism will be directed at the government for catering to the US, making the kind of action desired by Washington more difficult to achieve. Foreign Minister Olcay told Ambassador Handley on April 22 that the US could help in easing Turkey's serious political problems by controlling the "counterproductive and public US pressures"; he stressed that Ankara preferred to address the opium problem in the context of multilateral, rather than bilateral, relationships. In this way, he alleged, it would be easier for Turkey to cooperate with the US.

Technical Approach Emphasized. Ambassador Handley has reported that, during his discussions with Erim on April 27 and with Deputy Prime Minister Karaosmanoglu on April 20, both officials advanced the theme that the opium problem in Turkey must be attacked by technical means on the basis of economic realities. The idea of developing light industry in the poppy areas, as well as substitute crops, were specific suggestions offered by the Turks. This approach, however, would take a long time to implement, and it would not

achieve the goals of collecting all the opium production this spring, reducing legal planting to four provinces next fall, and stopping production entirely in the fall of 1972.

Noteworthy was Karaosmanoglu's statement to Ambassador Handley that upon coming into office he had found no information and evaluation group to advise the new government on the opium problem. Despite his numerous pledges, Prime Minister Demirel did not assign a high priority to solving the opium problem, and, in any case, he handled the problem through his own personal staff, now disbanded. A reliable Turkish source reported on April 9 that Karaosmanoglu had already requested an official study assessing the cost to the Turkish government of controlling the illicit opium trade as compared to the income that farmers earned by legal opium sales to government purchasing agents.

Prognosis. The government's decree of March 19 provides a means for tighter control of poppy culture within the limits of existing law. Unlike Demirel, the Erim government is not dependent on political support in the poppy growing provinces. On the other hand, the new government's first line supporters--the military--have not yet become directly involved in the opium issue, and a military source has indicated that the US cannot expect governmental initiatives to curb opium production for at least three to four months.

The government's effort to buy up this year's output of opium gum will be underway by late May; collection activities are expected to be more effective than a year ago because Turkish agricultural agents and police

are receiving vehicles and other logistical support through an AID loan of \$3,000,000. Moreover, training of enforcement personnel is beginning to show results, and the various ministries involved in the collection effort have prepared more detailed operational plans for this spring's campaign. By the summer, the government may have implemented the first steps of a long range scheme to subsidize poppy farmers or to find other sources of income for them.

The key man in formulating the government's policy will be Karaosmanoglu, who is fresh from four years' residence in Washington and presumably well versed in the humanitarian and diplomatic dimensions of the involvement of Turkish opium in the illicit trade. It is still too early, however, to affirm that he and other civilian leaders in Ankara have a strong personal and political commitment to control or eradicate poppy culture by 1972.

INR/Near East and South Asia

Director: Dayton S. Mak

Analyst : GRPreston *GRPLY PMS*

Ext : 22298

Released by: *RGm*

DECLASSIFIED
PA/HO, Department of State
E.O. 12958, as amended
June 22, 2004